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H. KEMANS'

HYMNS FOR CHILDHOOD

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THE RAINBOW.

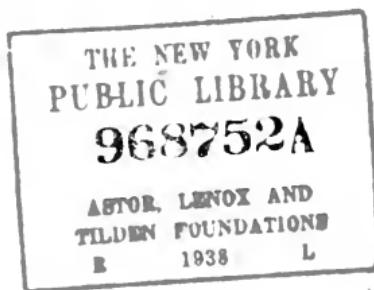
HYMNS
FOR
CHILDHOOD
ON
THE WORKS OF NATURE,

AND
OTHER SUBJECTS

FOR THE USE OF CHILDREN.

BY MRS. FELICIA HEMANS.

PHILADELPHIA:
HENRY F. ANNERS, CHESTNUT STREET.
1840.



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P R E F A C E .

THE following very simple compositions were written by Mrs. Hemans several years before their publication, exclusively for her own family circle, and without the remotest idea of their being offered to the public. It has since been her wish to render them more extensively, however humbly, useful. The Hymns were designed to associate the first

devotional thoughts of childhood with the solemnity diffused over the outward creation, and to awake in the tender mind a sense of the beauty and sublimity of the great works of God.

INTRODUCTORY VERSES.

Oh! blest are thou, whose steps may rove
Through the green paths of vale and grove,
Or, leaving all their charms below,
Climb the wild mountain's airy brow ;

And gaze afar o'er cultured plains,
And cities with their stately fanes,
And forests, that beneath thee lie,
And ocean mingling with the sky.

For man can show thee nought so fair,
As Nature's varied marvels there ;
And if thy pure and artless breast
Can feel their grandeur, thou art blest !

For thee, the stream in beauty flows,
For thee, the gale of summer blows,
And, in deep glen and wood-walk free,
Voices of joy still breathe for thee.

But happier far, if then thy soul
Can soar to Him who made the whole,
If to thine eye the simplest flower
Portray His bounty and His power.

If, in what'er is bright or grand,
Thy mind can trace His viewless hand,
If Nature's music bid thee raise
Thy song of gratitude and praise ;

If heaven and earth, with beauty fraught,
Lead to His throne thy raptured thought,
If there thou lov'st His love to read,
Then, wanderer, thou art blest indeed.



HYMNS
ON THE WORKS OF NATURE.

THE RAINBOW.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a
token of a covenant between me and the earth.

GENESIS ix. 13.

SOFT falls the mild, reviving shower
From April's changeful skies,
And rain-drops bend each trembling flower
They tinge with richer dyes.

Soon shall their genial influence call
A thousand buds to day,
Which, waiting but their balmy fall,
In hidden beauty lay.

E'en now full many a blossom's bell
With fragrance fills the shade ;
And verdure clothes each grassy dell,
In brighter tints arrayed.

But, mark ! what arch of varied hue
From heaven to earth is bowed ?
Haste, ere it vanish, haste to view
The Rainbow in the cloud.

How bright its glory ! there behold
The emerald's verdant rays,
The topaz blends its hue of gold
With the deep ruby's blaze.

Yet not alone to charm thy sight
Was given the vision fair ; —
Gaze on that arch of colored light,
And read God's mercy there.

It tells us that the mighty deep,
Fast by th' Eternal chained,
No more o'er earth's domains shall sweep,
Awful and unrestrained.

It tells that seasons, heat and cold,
 Fixed by his sovereign will,
Shall, in their course, bid man behold
 Seed-time and harvest still;

That still the flower shall deck the field,
 When vernal zephyrs blow ;
That still the vine its fruit shall yield,
 When autumn sun-beams glow.

Then, child of that fair earth ! which yet
 Smiles with each charm endowed,
Bless thou *His* name, whose mercy set
 The Rainbow in the cloud !

THE SUN.

THE sun comes forth ;—each mountain height
Glow^s with a tinge of rosy light,
And flowers, that slumbered through the night,
 Their dewy leaves unfold ;
A flood of splendor bursts on high,
And ocean's breast reflects a sky
 Of crimson and of gold.

Oh ! thou art glorious, orb of day !
Exulting nations hail thy ray,
Creation swells a choral lay,
 To welcome thy return ;
From thee all nature draws her hues,
Thy beams the insect's wings suffuse,
 And in the diamond burn.

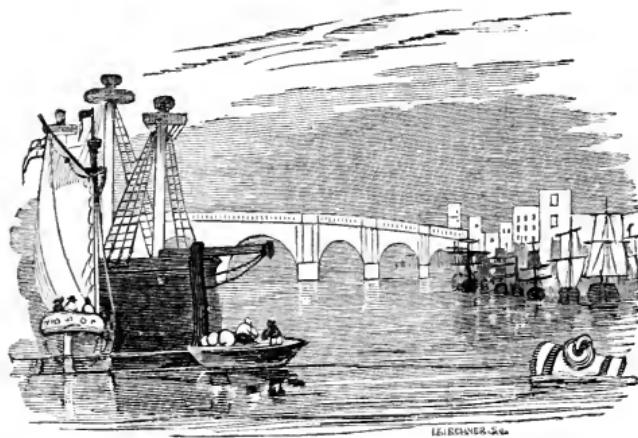
Yet must thou fade ;—when earth and heaven
By fire and tempest shall be riven,
Thou, from thy sphere of radiance driven.
Oh Sun ! must fall at last ;
Another heaven, another earth,
Far other glory shall have birth,
 When all we see is past.

But He, who gave the world of might,
“Let there be light”—and there *was* light,
Who bade thee chase the gloom of night,
And beam, the world to bless ;—
For ever bright, for ever pure,
Alone unchanging shall endure,
The Sun of Righteousness !

THE RIVERS.

Go ! trace th' unnumbered streams, o'er earth
That wind their devious course,
That draw from Alpine heights their birth.
Deep vale, or cavern source.

Some by majestic cities glide,
Proud scenes of man's renown,
Some lead their solitary tide,
Where pathless forests frown.



THE RIVER.



Some calmly roll in golden sands,
Where Afric's deserts lie;
Or spread, to clothe rejoicing lands
With rich fertility.

These bear the bark, whose stately sail
Exulting seems to swell;
While these, scarce rippled by a gale,
Sleep in the lonely dell.

Yet on, alike, though swift or slow
Their various waves may sweep,
Through cities or through shades they flow
To the same boundless deep.

Oh ! thus, whate'er our path of life,
Through sunshine or through gloom,
Through scenes of quiet or of strife,
Its end is still the tomb.

The chief, whose mighty deeds we hail,
The monarch throned on high,
The peasant in his native vale,
All journey on — to die !

But if *Thy* guardian care, my God !
The pilgrim's course attend,
I will not fear the dark abode,
To which my footsteps bend.

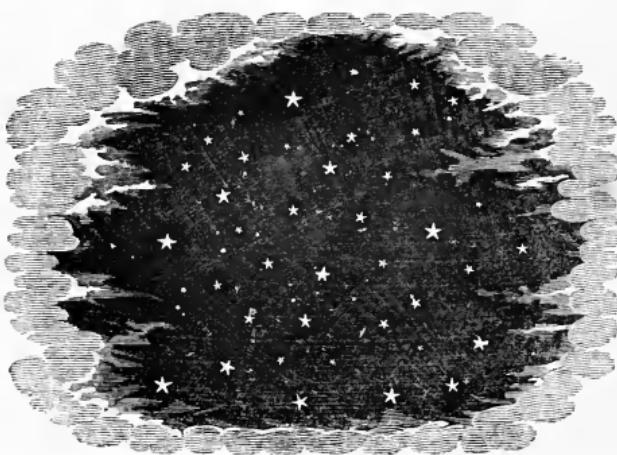
For thence thine all-redeeming Son,
Who died, the world to save,
In light, in triumph, rose, and won
The victory from the grave !

THE STARS.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work.

PSALM xix. 1.

No cloud obscures the summer sky,
The moon in brightness walks on high,
And, set in azure, every star
Shines, like a gem of heaven, afar !



THE STARS.



Child of the earth ! oh ! lift thy glance
To yon bright firmament's expanse ;
The glories of its realm explore,
And gaze, and wonder, and adore !

Doth it not speak to every sense
The marvels of Omnipotence ?
Seest thou not there th' Almighty name,
Inscribed in characters of flame ?

Count o'er those lamps of quenchless light,
That sparkle through the shades of night ;
Behold them ! — can a mortal boast
To number that celestial host ?

Mark well each little star, whose rays
In distant splendor meet thy gaze ;
Each is a world by Him sustained,
Who from eternity hath reigned.

Each, shining not for earth alone,
Hath suns and planets of its own,
And beings, whose existence springs
From Him, th' all-powerful King of kings.

Haply, those glorious beings know
Nor stain of guilt, nor tear of wo ;
But raising still th' adoring voice,
For ever in their God rejoice.

What then art *thou*, oh! child of clay!
Amid creation's grandeur, say?
—E'en as an insect on the breeze,
E'en as a dew-drop, lost in seas!

Yet fear thou not! — the sovereign hand.
Which spread the ocean and the land.
And hung the rolling spheres in air.
Hath e'en for thee, a Father's care!

Be thou at peace! — th' all-seeing eye.
Pervading earth, and air, and sky,
The searching glance which none may flee.
Is still, in mercy, turned on thee.

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

O lovely voices of the sky,
That hymn'd the Saviour's birth !
Are ye not singing still on high,
Ye that sang " Peace on earth ?"
To us yet speak the strains
Wherewith, in days gone by,
Ye bless'd the Syrian swains,
O voices of the sky !

O clear and shining light, whose beams,
That hour Heaven's glory shed
Around the palms, and o'er the streams,
And on the shepherd's head ;
Be near, through life and death,
As in that holiest night
Of hope, and joy, and faith,
O clear and shining light !

O star which led to Him, whose love
Brought down man's ransom free;
Where art thou ?—midst the hosts above,
May we still gaze on thee ?—
In heaven thou art not set,
Thy rays earth might not dim,
Send them to guide us yet !
O star which led to Him !

A FATHER READING THE BIBLE.

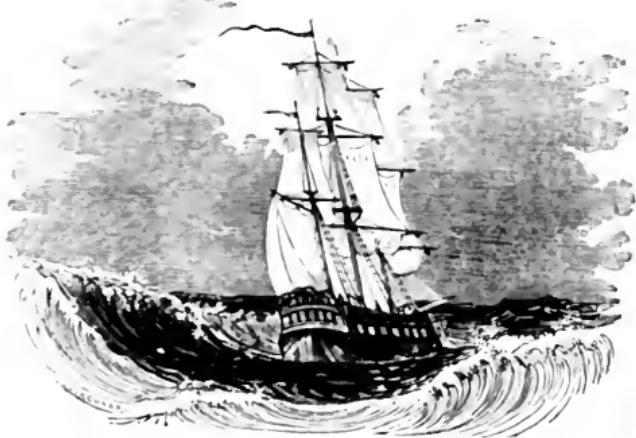
'Twas early day, and sunlight stream'd
Soft through a quiet room,
That hush'd but not forsaken seem'd.
Still, but with naught of gloom.
For there, serene in happy age,
Whose hope is from above,
A father communed with the page
Of Heaven's recorded love.

Pure fell the beam, and meekly bright,
On his gray holy hair,
And touch'd the page with tenderest light,
As if its shrine were there !
But oh ! that patriarch's aspect shone
With something lovelier far,
A radiance all the spirits own,
Caught not from sun or star.

Some word of life e'en then had met
His calm benignant eye,
Some ancient promise breathing yet
Of immortality :
Some martyr's prayer, wherein the glow
Of quenchless faith survives—
For every feature said, "*I know*
That my Redeemer lives !"

And silent stood his children by.
Hushing their very breath,
Before the solemn sanctity
Of thoughts o'er sweeping death.
Silent—yet did not each young breast
With love and reverence melt?
Oh ! blest be those fair girls, and blest
That home where God is felt !





THE OCEAN.

THE OCEAN.

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.

PSALM cvii. 23, 24.

He that in venturous barks hath been
A wanderer on the deep,
Can tell of many an awful scene,
Where storms for ever sweep.

For many a fair, majestic sight
Hath met his wandering eye,
Beneath the streaming northern light.
Or blaze of Indian sky,

Go ! ask him of the whirlpool's roar,
Whose echoing thunder peals
Loud, as if rushed along the shore
An army's chariot wheels ;

Of icebergs, floating o'er the main,
Or fixed upon the coast,
Like glittering citadel or fane,
'Mid the bright realms of frost ;

Of coral rocks, from waves below
In steep ascent that tower,
And fraught with peril, daily grow,
Formed by an insect's power ;

Of sea-fires, which at dead of night
Shine o'er the tides afar,
And make th' expanse of ocean bright
As heaven with many a star.

Oh God ! thy name they well may praise,
Who to the deep go down,
And trace the wonders of thy ways,
Where rocks and billows frown.

If glorious be that awful deep,
No human power can bind,
What then art Thou, who bidst it keep
Within its bounds confined !

Let heaven and earth in praise unite.
Eternal praise to Thee,
Whose word can rouse the tempest's might,
Or still the raging sea !





THE THUNDER STORM.

THE THUNDER STORM.

DEEP, fiery clouds o'ercast the sky,
Dead stillness reigns in air,
There is not e'en a breeze, on high
The gossamer to bear.

The woods are hushed, the waves at rest,
The lake is dark and still,
Reflecting, on its shadowy breast,
Each form of rock and hill.

The lime-leaf waves not in the grove,
Nor rose-tree in the bower;
The birds have ceased their songs of love,
Awed by the threatening hour.

'Tis noon ;— yet nature's calm profound
Seems as at midnight deep ;
— But hark ! what peal of awful sound
Breaks on creation's sleep ?

The thunder bursts! — its rolling might
Seems the firm hills to shake ;
And in terrific splendor bright,
The gathered lightnings break.

Yet fear not, shrink not thou, my child !

Though by the bolt's descent
Were the tall cliffs in ruins piled,
And the wide forests rent.

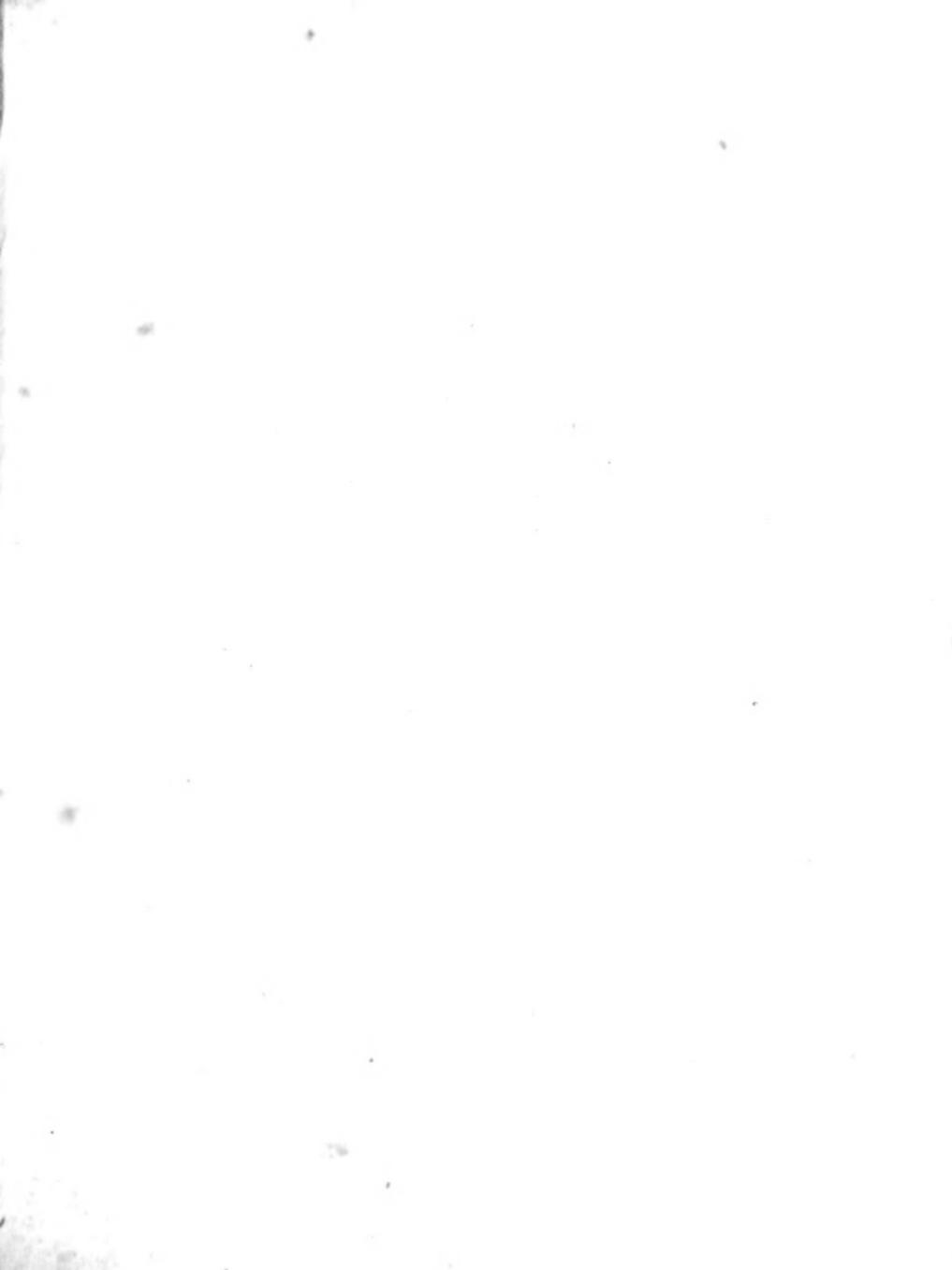
Doth not thy God behold thee still,
With all-surveying eye ?

Doth not his power all nature fill,
Around, beneath, on high ?

Know, hadst thou eagle-pinions free,
To track the realms of air,
Thou couldst not reach a spot where He
Would not be with thee there !

In the wide city's peopled towers,
On the vast ocean's plains,
'Midst the deep woodland's loneliest bowers,
Alike th' Almighty reigns !

Then fear not, though the angry sky
A thousand darts should cast ; —
Why should we tremble, e'en to die,
And be with *Him* at last ?





THE SICK BED.

HYMN

BY THE SICK BED OF A MOTHER.

FATHER! that in the olive shade,
When the dark hour came on,
Didst, with a breath of heavenly aid,
Strengthen thy Son;

Oh! by the anguish of that night,
Send us down blest relief;
Or to the chasten'd let thy might
Hallow this grief!

And Thou, that when the starry sky
Saw the dread strife begun,
Didst teach adoring faith to cry,
“Thy will be done!”

By thy meek spirit, Thou, of all
That e'er have mourn'd the chief,
Thou Saviour! if the stroke *must* fall!
Hallow this grief!

THE CHILD'S FIRST GRIEF.

“OH ! call my brother back to me !
I cannot play alone ;
The summer comes with flower and bee —
Where is my brother gone ?

“The butterfly is glancing bright
Across the sunbeam’s track ;
I care not now to chase its flight,
Oh ! call my brother back !

“ The flowers run wild—the flowers we sow’d
 Around our garden tree ;
Our vine is drooping with its load,
 Oh ! call him back to me !”

“ He would not hear thy voice, fair child ;
 He may not come to thee ;
The face that once like spring-time smiled,
 On earth no more thou’lt see.

“ A rose’s brief bright life of joy,
 Such unto him was given ;
Go — thou must play alone, my boy !
 Thy brother is in heaven.”

“ And has he left his birds and flowers ;
And must I call in vain ?
And through the long, long summer hours,
Will he not come again ?

“ And by the brook and in the glade
Are all our wanderings o'er ?
Oh ! while my brother with me play'd,
Would I had loved him more !”

EPITAPH

OVER THE GRAVE OF TWO BROTHERS—A CHILD
AND A YOUTH.

Thou, that canst gaze upon thine own fair
boy,
And hear his prayer's low murmur at thy
knee,
And o'er his slumber bend in breathless joy,
Come to this tomb! it hath a voice for thee!
Pray! — thou art blest, ask strength for sor-
row's hour,
Love, deep as thine, lays here its broken
flower.

Thou ! that art gathering from the smile of
youth,

Thy thousand hopes, rejoicing to behold
All the heart's depths before thee bright with
truth,

All the mind's treasure silently unfold ;
Look on this tomb ! for thee, too, speaks the
grave,

Where God hath seal'd the fount of hope
he gave.

THE BIRDS.

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not
one of them is forgotten before God.

ST. LUKE. xii. 6.

TRIBES of the air ! whose favored race
May wander through the realms of space,
Free guests of earth and sky ;
In form, in plumage, and in song,
What gifts of nature mark your throng
With bright variety !

Nor differ less your forms, your flight,
 Your dwellings hid from hostile sight,
 And the wild haunts ye love ;
 Birds of the gentle beak !* how dear
 Your wood-note, to the wanderer's ear,
 In shadowy vale or grove !

Far other scenes, remote, sublime,
 Where swain or hunter may not climb,
 The mountain-eagle seeks ;
 Alone he reigns, a monarch there,
 Scarce will the chamois' footstep dare
 Ascend his Alpine peaks.

* The Italians call all singing birds, *Birds of the gentle beak.*

Others there are, that make their home
Where the white billows roar and foam,
 Around th' o'erhanging rock ;
Fearless they skim the angry wave,
Or sheltered in their sea-beat cave,
 The tempest's fury mock.

Where Afric's burning realm expands,
The ostrich haunts the desert sands,
 Parched by the blaze of day ;
The swan, where northern rivers glide,
Through the tall reeds that fringe their tide,
 Floats graceful on her way.

The condor, where the Andes tower,
Spreads his broad wing of pride and power,
And many a storm defies ;
Bright in the orient realms of morn,
All beauty's richest hues adorn
The Bird of Paradise.

Some, amidst India's grove of palm,
And spicy forests breathing balm,
Weave soft their pendent nest ;
Some, deep in western wilds, display
Their fairy form and plumage gay,
In rainbow colors drest.

Others no varied song may pour,
May boast no eagle-plume to soar,
 No tints of light may wear;
Yet, know, our Heavenly Father guides
The least of these, and well provides
 For each, with tenderest care.

Shall He not then *thy* guardian be ?
Will not his aid extend to *thee* ?
 Oh ! safely may'st thou rest ! —
Trust in his love, and e'en should pain,
Should sorrow tempt thee to complain,
 Know, what He wills is best !





THE NIGHTINGALE.

THE SKY-LARK.

THE Sky-lark, when the dews of morn
Hang tremulous on flower and thorn,
And violets round his nest exhale
Their fragrance on the early gale,
To the first sunbeam spreads his wings,
Buoyant with joy, and soars, and sings.

He rests not on the leafy spray,
To warble his exulting lay,

But high above the morning cloud
Mounts in triumphant freedom proud,
And swells, when nearest to the sky,
His notes of sweetest ecstacy.

Thus, my Creator ! thus the more
My spirit's wing to Thee can soar,
The more she triumphs to behold
Thy love in all thy works unfold,
And bids her hymns of rapture be
Most glad, when rising most to Thee !

THE NIGHTINGALE.

WHEN twilight's grey and pensive hour
Brings the low breeze, and shuts the flower,
And bids the solitary star
Shine in pale beauty from afar ;

When gathering shades the landscape veil,
And peasants seek their village-dale,
And mists from river-wave arise,
And dew in every blossom lies ;

When evening's primrose opes, to shed
Soft fragrance round her grassy bed ;
When glow-worms in the wood-walk light
Their lamp, to cheer the traveller's sight;

At that calm hour, so still, so pale,
Awakes the lonely Nightingale ;
And from a hermitage of shade
Fills with her voice the forest-glade.

And sweeter far that melting voice,
Than all which through the day rejoice ;
And still shall bard and wanderer love
The twilight music of the grove.

Father in Heaven ! oh ! thus when day
With all its cares has passed away,
And silent hours waft peace on earth,
And hush the louder strains of mirth ;

Thus may sweet songs of praise and prayer
To Thee my spirit's offering bear ;
Yon star, my signal, set on high,
For vesper-hymns of piety.

So may thy mercy and thy power
Protect me through the midnight hour ;
And balmy sleep and visions blest
Smile on thy servant's bed of rest.

THE NORTHERN SPRING.

WHEN the soft breath of Spring goes forth
Far o'er the mountains of the North,
How soon those wastes of dazzling snow
With life, and bloom, and beauty glow.

Then bursts the verdure of the plains,
Then break the streams from icy chains :
And the glad rein-deer seeks no more
Amidst deep snows his mossy store.

Then the dark pine-wood's boughs are seen
Arrayed in tints of living green;
And roses, in their brightest dyes,
By Lapland's founts and lakes arise.

Thus, in a moment, from the gloom
And the cold fetters of the tomb,
Thus shall the blest Redeemer's voice
Call forth his servants to rejoice.

For He, whose word is truth, hath said.
His power to life shall wake the dead,
And summon those he loves, on high.
To "put on immortality!"

Then, all its transient sufferings o'er,
On wings of light, the soul shall soar,
Exulting, to that blest abode,
Where tears of sorrow never flowed.

PARAPHRASE OF PSALM CXLVIII.

Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the
heavens : praise him in the heights.

PRAISE ye the Lord ! on every height
Songs to his glory raise !
Ye angel-hosts, ye stars of light,
Join in immortal praise !

Oh! heaven of heavens! let praise far-swelling
From all your orbs be sent!
Join in the strain, ye waters, dwelling
Above the firmament!

For His the word which gave you birth,
And majesty, and might;
Praise to the Highest from the earth.
And let the deeps unite!

Oh! fire and vapor, hail and snow.
Ye servants of His will!
Oh! stormy winds, that only blow
His mandates to fulfil;

Mountains and rocks, to heavens that rise ;
Fair cedars of the wood ;
Creatures of life, that wing the skies,
Or track the plains for food :

Judges of nations ! kings, whose hand
Waves the proud sceptre high !
Oh ! youths and virgins of the land.
Oh ! age and infancy !

Praise ye *His* name, to whom alone
All homage should be given ;
Whose glory, from th' eternal throne
Spreads wide o'er earth and heaven !

CHRIST WALKING ON THE
WATERS.

FEAR was within the tossing bark,
When stormy winds grew loud,
And waves came rolling high and dark,
And the tall mast was bow'd,

And men stood breathless in their dread,
And baffled in their skill —
But One was there, who rose, and said
To the wild sea, "*Be still!*!"



CHRIST WALKING ON THE WATERS.



And the wind ceased—it ceased!—that word
Passed through the gloomy sky;
The troubled billows knew their Lord,
And fell beneath His eye.

And slumber settled on the deep,
And silence on the blast;
They sank, as flowers that fold to sleep
When sultry day is past.

Oh! Thou, that in its wildest hour
Didst rule the tempest's mood,
Send thy meek spirit forth in power,
Soft on our souls to brood.

Thou that didst bow the billow's pride,
Thy mandate to fulfil,
Oh! speak to passion's raging tide,
Speak, and say, "*Peace, be still!*"

TO ONE OF THE AUTHOR'S
CHILDREN

ON HIS BIRTHDAY, AUGUST 27, 1826.

THOU wak'st from happy sleep to play
With bounding heart, my boy !
Before thee lies a long bright day
Of summer and of joy.

Thou hast no heavy thought or dream
To cloud thy fearless eye ; —
Long be it thus — life's early stream
Should still reflect the sky.

Yet ere the cares of life lie dim
On thy young spirit's wings,
Now in thy morn forget not Him
From whom each pure thought springs !

So in the onward vale of tears,
Where'er thy path may be,
When strength hath bowed to evil years —
He will remember thee.

THE END.

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